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SUBJECT: HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ADDRESSES UN
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

REF: USUN 834

¶1. (U) On October 24, the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly heard reports by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour. She highlighted the pervasiveness of impunity for gross violations of human rights, noting a lack of will and resources to address the issue. Without elaborating, Arbour also made a statement expressing her concern for "individuals incarcerated without adequate judicial review."

¶3. (U) Several countries asked Arbour about the division of labor between the Third Committee and the Human Rights Council (HRC). Countries also frequently commented on treaty body reform and the imbalance of geographical distribution of employees in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Many noted that as much attention should be given to economic, social and cultural rights as is given to political and civic rights.

¶4. (U) In response to questions about the respective roles of the Third Committee and the HRC, Arbour noted diplomatically that member states will decide the nature of this relationship. She took the opportunity to clarify the circumstances regarding the introduction of her reports on Uganda and Nepal on the first day of the current Third Committee session, Oct. 8, which the Third Committee after fractious debate voted to delete from the agenda (reftel). She stated that the OHCHR offices in Uganda and Nepal have MOUs with the respective governments. Both MOUs contemplate that the OHCHR will present reports to the Third Committee and the HRC. She stated that her actions in presenting the reports to the Third Committee were taken in compliance with bilateral agreements and that the reports were shared for comments prior to being circulated.

¶5. (U) Uganda replied that the MOU does exist, but neither the Ugandan government nor the Ugandan mission in Geneva had prior knowledge that the report was to be presented in the 62nd session of the General Assembly. The delegate reiterated her claim that Uganda had been ambushed.

¶6. The full report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights can be found at:
<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/46 1/09/PDF/N0746109.pdf?openelement>
Khalilzad